

Washington, DC – Congressman Todd Akin, Chairman of the Seapower & Projection Forces Subcommittee, today released a letter that he sent with 16 other Congressmen raising concerns about reported delays in the medical evacuation system in Afghanistan. The letter, sent on Friday to Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, is in response to both media reports and direct reports from servicemembers in Afghanistan regarding Army medical evacuation (medevac) helicopters being delayed due to a lack of escort helicopters. Congressman Akin sent an initial letter to the Secretary of Defense on this issue on January 17, but has not yet received a response.

Congressman Akin released the following statement:

“There is no doubt in my mind that the medical care our wounded warriors receive today is the best the world has ever seen. However, we should never say “good enough” but must continue refining and improving our system of care. For this reason, we are raising concerns about reports we have received of Army medevac helicopters being delayed due to the requirement for an armed escort helicopter. Unfortunately, the Department of Defense has thus far not provided the information we have requested. I certainly hope that the Department will work with Congress to identify the root cause of the problem and ways to address it, rather than retreating into defensive mode.

“As with any complex problem, there is probably more than one way to fix this problem, but we need answers from the Department to be able to move forward. Do we need more attack helicopters in Afghanistan? Do we need to make policy changes to allow commanders on the ground more flexibility in how they employ medevac and casevac helicopters? Or do we need to discuss arming medevac helicopters? These are just a few possible avenues of dealing with this problem.

“The bottom line is that we will not accept “good enough” when it comes to the medical care provided to our wounded warriors. If there is room for improvement, as these reports seem to indicate, I am committed to working with the Department to address them. I certainly hope the Department will work cooperatively with us to mitigate this issue.”

*Letter to Secretary Panetta from 17 Members of Congress (03 February 2012) - [MEDEVAC Letter to SECDEF 02-03-12.pdf](#)*

*Original Letter to Secretary Panetta from Rep. Akin (17 January 2012) - [LINK](#)*

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